

[Billy Robinson]

Life History [1,430?] Words

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by

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Range Lore and Cowboy

Reminiscences of Early Days UVALDE COUNTY, DISTRICT #10

BILLY ROBINSON

Sabinel, Texas.

"There were five boys and four girls in our family. My father was killed by the Indians up on Chalk Bluff on the [Hueces?] River. He came to this country shortly after the Wares, Kellys, Davenports, Kinchaloos, Fenleys and others settled in the canyon. Chris Kelly moved my father out from Kaufman County.

"My father settled on the Frio River south of the present site of Con Can. While we were living there, Old Man Tom Leahey had a lone battle with Indians who came to his place. Their trail showed blood and that there were three Indians. He got the settlers together next morning who were Old Thompson, [Sebe?] Barrymore, Silas Webster and my father, Henry Robinson. There was a steep mountain to be climbed and when they reached the

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top of it, they were hot and tired. My father was in the lead and saw at a glance that they were in a trap when Indians began to pop up from everywhere. Raising his rifle he fired quickly and told Mr. Leahey to do the same, but Mr. Leahey had trouble with his gun and couldn't pull the hammer down so he pulled his pistol when he was right at an Indian.

"Finally his pistol refused to fire and thinking he was out of loads, He jumped from the cliff, catching at bushes and rocks for a hundred feet and he finally caught in a cedar tree. This small sapling wouldn't hold his weight so he rolled on over the ledge. The Indians thought he was dead and two of them went down a better path to scalp him but he raised up with the pistol and began to cursing them and the white men up on the cliff heard him. My father told the men, 'He isn't dead yet, listen at him cursing the Indians!' They got to Mr. Leahey and gave him water and pulled two arrows out of him. There were [?] wounds. He was carried back to the settlement and recovered from his wounds in about six weeks.

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"Then before we left the canyon my brother Henry was killed by the Indians. He and I had taken a little homemade wagon and gone above the house past the field to haul up some wood. Two Indians had hidden in the corner of the field and they jumped out to grab us as we came along and we started running. They killed Henry and started on after me but I kept in the lead. My mother and sisters ran out in the hall way and saw the Indian about to catch me. They grabbed a gun and fired at the Indian just as I got to the fence and he stopped, so I got through the gate and to the house.

"Chris Kelly and some more men were trailing the Indians that had stolen Chris' fine race horse and they came across Henry's body right soon after he was killed within a quarter of a mile of the house.

"We moved to Fort [?] below Uvalde the same year we got to the canyon then we moved to Chalk Bluff above Uvalde where my father was killed.

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"We were living on the river and a family had come in there and camped below us. The Indians know my father and they had waylaid him this day and killed him. No doubt they had feared him a long time for they took the pain to take off one of his boots and come on down the valley with it to where his home was. Their idea was to bring it to mother to let her know they had finally got him.

"When they got to our place on the Hueses, mother was not at the house. She had taken me and one of the youngest children down to visit some neighbors who were camped below us and right near. These people had come in there from California and liked the Hueces valley. They had several children.

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"When mother heard the awful racket up at our house she left us and rushed up there thinking of the children. One of my oldest sisters ran out with a little sister by each hand and George, my oldest brother, called from the house to mother as she came running, 'What shall we do?' Mother saw that the place was full of Indians and George was already wounded in the arm. She called back, 'Fight till we die!' and she picked up rocks as she came. The Indians were amazed and wouldn't even shoot her as she came toward them trying to kill them with rocks. They had plundered the house and destroyed all they could by now and mother was with George trying to fight them off. The woman and children below the camp ran and hid but the Indians fearing some of the ranchmen would ride up, left. Down the road, they found my little sister hiding with the other little neighbor girl who was red headed. They caught the little red headed girl and jerked her up on one of the horses and scalped her alive as they rode along while the other Indians were lancing her. Then they slung her to the ground and said in English, 'Damn you, die!' As wounded as she was, she answered back, 'Damn you, I wont die!'

"It was about dark when all the ranchmen were gathering and help had gotten there, that the dogs at our house began barking and cutting up. Then we heard the voice of that

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wounded, bloody, baby girl, who had dragged herself to the gate. She said to the dogs, 'Don't you know me?'

"We thought the Indians had carried her off and of course the men were gathering to follow them. When she got there she was the most horrible looking sight. But she recovered and grew to be a young lady and married.

"When the Indians left our house that day they left my father's boot and of course my mother knew he was killed. He was an experienced Indian fighter and the Indians admired him as well as feared him.

"My mother went back to the Sabinal Canyon to the old Kelly place east side of the [?] River. They stayed there about a year then they went to the 4 Webster ranch which was our old place on the Frio, and we stayed a year or two. From there we came back to Uvalde and lived in a house east of the Leons River.

"I remember as well as if it was yesterday when Chris Kelly took his big herd of cattle to California. I was just a school kid. I played with his boys all the time and had many a fight with them too. We'd fight each other or fight for one another. We were living there at Uvalde when Chris Kelly left his family there and you know those plazas over there used to be full of cows and jacks and we boys used to go up to town and catch a jack. They were just loose jacks (or burros) that come off the range. One night [?] Mullins and I caught a jack and rode along and we got to crowding the old fellow too much and he just put his head down and stopped and we went on.

"I can remember the soldiers shooting up the town of night too. You know Uvalde used to be a bad town. Some bad men used to come in there and I remember we had, at one time, one of the worst men that ever was in Texas — Henry Young. His own friends killed him in jail. He had killed [sberry,?] his friend. It was a drunken brawl and Young was badly

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wounded too. Pete Howles an Warren Allen went over to the jail to see who could kill him first and Warren Allen saw him first and killed him.

“George Hammer wasn't a bad man but he was one of the bravest men I ever saw. He just wasn't afraid of anything. I saw him in Kansas in a saloon one time standing at the bar and he saw a Negro come in with a stove-pipe hat on and the Negro drank a schooner of beer and lighted a cigar. He was so insolent it was too much for George, so he walked up and hit him on the burr of the ear and the hat flew one way and the Negro the other.

“I went up the trail twice to Dodge City , Kansas. It took us seventy-six days to make the trip. We went out from Uvalde up the Main Frio and hit Paint Creek, south Elano and San Angelo. We stayed all night on Old man Adams Wilson' place. This was a herd for F. C. Gates, and our [?] got lost up on Paint Creek 5 and when we did find our selves I tell you there wasn't a man in the outfit that wasn't mad.

“I saw seven head of cattle sink in the quick sand in the [ashita?] River. They stopped to drink and kept treading the water and sand and going down till there was nothing left but the points of their horns sticking out. And I remember John [?] taking his horse out in the middle of the stream to drink and when he stooped down to drink he started sinking. I came along and hit his horse with my quirt and out he went.

“We only traveled six or seven miles a day on the trail on account of the drags. It's a funny thing — when you get to Kansas the drags would be your lend cattle. And milk! We sure had plenty to drink. Every thing sure got fat on the trail little as you'd think so. You wouldn't know your own saddle horse by the time you got to Kansas.

“On that trip we had nine cow-hands and a cook. And we had beans and bacon and bacon and beans. No potatoes. Never had seen a potato or knew what it was. We had rice and dried apples. But we wanted meat, we were used to meat. We had meat about twice or three times except some Antelope meat. Antelope meant isn't near as good as venison.

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We carried one extra suit of clothes with us but I remember one fellow who never washed his undershirt till he got to Kansas. We carried an overcoat for that was sure important and that was about all except our leggins and rope.

"I remember a good woman rider over at Fort Clark who was called Babe Ross. By giminy, she rode horses all the time and she rode after her own stock. No, she wasn't a bit pretty but she sure could ride. They called her the cowboy girl and she was just that. I didn't know much about her but I know she always rode a flea-bitten , gray pony and nothing ever got away from her.

"Of course, I saw girls in rodeos and one of the best riders was a 6 [McHonagin?] girl from Oklahoma. Her father was a regular old cowman and a sport but they were fine riders.

"When I quit the cowboy life , I went to work in Uvalde for Old Man Burkett in his store and while I was living there I met Miss Alice Smith who was the daughter of the editor of the Uvalde newspaper called the 'Hesperian.' It was the second newspaper to be established there and was later called the Leader News. Alice and I married in '82 and we lived in Uvalde seven years. She was a genuine brunette, coal black hair and eyes and a fine musician. We were all methodists and quit dancing and joined the church. When my wife's health broke, she had twenty-six in her orchestra there. We never had any children but our home was always open to the young folks. She died in 1920.

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